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# Leagues Clubs Australia Submission 2015

CATEGORY: # JOHN KNIPE AWARD  
NOMINATION: WESTS ILLAWARRA

## THE INAUGURAL DISABILITY TRUST NIGHT AT WESTS ILLAWARRA

**Recognising outstanding dedication to working with community organisations or disadvantaged groups. Includes social disadvantage, aged care and special groups.**

In 2015 Wests Illawarra hosted the inaugural Disability Trust Gala Night, which raised an amazing \$135,000 to purchase equipment such as special wheelchairs and orthotics for children with disabilities.

The Gala Night, has become an annual event that supports the Disability Trust, a Wollongong-based organisation that provides disability care services over a wide area from southern Sydney to the Victorian border. The money raised was allocated to the Trust's Kids Fund, which raises money to buy expensive specialist equipment for families with children with disabilities, as well as the Trust's sports programs for young people with disabilities.

The Gala Night replaced the club's previous long-running Bandage Bear Benefit Night which had raised money for the Children's Hospital at Westmead as well as Kids Fund. This year it was decided to concentrate our energies on one organisation.

**The event was a major success. NSW Minister for Disabilities John Ajaka and local MPs and Mayors attended, along with over 300 community members and Disability Trust supporters for a night of fine dining, entertainment and fund-raising.**

Jacob Carroll, was the star of the night, he plays in the 'all abilities' soccer team and is also a Kids Fund recipient. On the Gala night Jacob also received an additional beach wheelchair on the evening, thanks to the generosity of Wests Illawarra and a couple of local other Clubs.

Jacob is a 9 year old twin to brother Sam who also attended on the evening with their amazing mum and dad.

In the last year, Kids Fund and The Disability Trust allocated over \$95,000 across 43 pieces of equipment to local children with disabilities. 13 children benefited from a pair of orthotics. 5 new wheelchair, 5 walkers, 5 strollers and a modified bike were all purchased for local Illawarra families. All of these items are essential equipment that makes a tangible difference to the everyday lives of children. A paediatric stroller can mean a child can now get to the park with their brothers and sisters. A walker for a child gives independence at school so they can hang out with

their friends at lunchtime. A modified bike gives the child the thrill of bike riding but with the support and safety they require. In total, 43 young lives in the Illawarra were helped in 2014 through Kids Fund. All of this was possible because the community continues to support The Disability Trust.

Wests Illawarra Chairman Trevor Castle said: "The Board is strongly committed to the youth of this region. The Gala Night is all about raising money to make life a little better for children and young adults living with a disability and their families."

Disability Trust Executive Manager, Organisational Development, Matthew Martin said: "The Disability Trust cannot thank our partners Wests Illawarra enough. Their generosity and support since 2006 has contributed to our Kids Fund charity purchasing more than \$1 million worth of equipment and changing the lives of more than 450 local families throughout the Illawarra along the way.

"Our biggest fundraising event is The Disability Trust Gala Night held at Wests Illawarra. This year's Gala Night raised \$135,000 with all of these proceeds going to assist two programs managed by The Disability Trust - Kids Fund, which purchases aids for children with disabilities in the Illawarra, and Sport and Recreation, which provides creative and recreational opportunities for children and young adults.

**"We are extremely grateful to Wests Illawarra for hosting the evening and for donating a cheque worth \$50,000 to Kids Fund."**

The Gala Night is part of "Project Unite", an Aster Group community initiative (formally just Wests Illawarra) that supports a variety of organisations, sporting clubs and community bodies across the Group. Project Unite aims to encourage a positive future filled with life, energy and vibrancy in the community.

### DOLLAR CONTRIBUTION:

Wests Illawarra contributed \$50,000 to Kids Fund as well as hosting the Gala Dinner and providing in-kind support on the evening.

### Supporting Documentation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kg6v7Gy11Mc&list=UUSDietEGsILL7iugH5xkzBg>  
Attachment #1 & Attachment #2.



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